

Handout Packet

Public Information Meeting on the Environmental Aspects
and
Federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement

for

Project ID 1154-01-01
Oconto – Peshtigo
US 41
Oconto & Marinette counties

MEETING INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS

This meeting is being conducted on behalf of the Department of Transportation as part of the consideration of the environmental aspects of the proposed improvement of US 41 from Oconto to Peshtigo in Oconto and Marinette Counties. Information related to roadway design details, property access, and real estate acquisition will not be presented at this meeting.

The objective of this meeting is to supplement the hearings that were held in 1999, providing you additional opportunity to comment on the environmental aspects of this proposed improvement. This meeting will also provide you the opportunity to comment on the recently prepared Federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This environmental document, which is an update to the State Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Federal Environmental Assessment) that was prepared in 1999, includes updated information, especially for the recommended proposal. The information for these updates became available as more detailed design work was done on the recommended corridor alternative.

Please notice the comment sheet attached as the last page of this handout. If you would like to have an environmental-related statement recorded as part of the official transcript of this meeting, please fill out the sheet and provide your statement to the court reporter. You may provide your statement orally or in writing.

Other written statements regarding environmental aspects, in place of or in addition to those statements being documented at this public meeting, will be included in the official meeting transcript if postmarked not later than June 6, 2005. Mail these additional statements by using the preaddressed/prepaid mailer on the back side of the comment sheet.

Copies of the official meeting transcript will be available at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's District 3 office upon request.

INFORMATION FOR THE RECORD

The legal notice for this meeting was published in the area newspapers. Its purpose was to advertise the meeting, announce where additional information could be obtained, and invite all interested persons to attend. Copies of the notice were sent to state and federal agencies and elected representatives. In addition to the formal notices, news releases were sent to the various news media to further announce this meeting. The meeting announcement was also made available on a website dedicated to this highway project.

The environmental document for this project proposal has been made available to the public and copies are here for your review.

Also made available to you this evening is this Handout Packet that contains a specific statement about the proposal. This packet also includes the name, address, and phone number of the person to contact regarding environmental aspects for this proposal.

The published notice, environmental document, handout packet, photographs of meeting displays, comment sheet, and other information requested to be recorded as part of this meeting will be entered as part of the official meeting transcript.

PROJECT STATEMENT

Explanation of Environmental Document Update

As mentioned above under the section titled *Meeting Introduction and Instructions*, the objective of this meeting is to supplement the hearings that were held in 1999, providing you additional opportunity to comment on the environmental aspects of this proposed improvement.

As is the case with all proposed highway projects, this project was required to have an environmental review and document prepared for it. The purpose of an environmental document is to identify potential environmental impacts, evaluate and compare the impacts of possible project alternatives, and identify the most practicable alternative for addressing the project's purpose and need while minimizing environmental impacts.

As part of the standard environmental review process, the appropriate document "type" must be chosen for a project. This determination is based on the extent of the project work and its anticipated amount of environmental impacts. Large projects such as this one often start as a Federal Environmental Assessment (Federal EA), which is the type of document that was released to the public for this project in 1999.

The intent of a Federal EA is to determine the magnitude impacts of the proposed project alternatives, and determine whether or not the environmental document must be upgraded to a Federal Environmental Impact Statement (Federal EIS), following Federal guidelines. Through field surveys, investigations, and coordination with various agencies, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration determine the magnitude of the project's environmental impacts. If no significant impacts are recognized, the Federal EA becomes the final approved environmental document type for the project, and the project proceeds through final design and construction phases.

If significant impacts are identified, the environmental document type is upgraded to a Federal Environmental Impact Statement (Federal EIS). Since field surveys identified significant wetlands from Oconto to Peshtigo, the document for this project was upgraded to a Federal EIS. The Federal EIS for this USH 41 project includes some updated information on the environmental impacts, and this evening's meeting simply gives you the opportunity to review and comment on these updates. **Understand that the recommended corridor that was selected in January 2000 has not changed.** Once the Federal EIS review period is completed and the necessary approvals are received, the project will proceed through the final design and construction phases.

Alternative Selection

As part of this project's environmental study and corridor selection process, a wide range of alternatives was considered to satisfy this project's purpose and need. The purpose

and need for this project is to properly address the following factors in both the present and future:

- System Linkage and Route Importance
- Traffic Demand
- Highway Capacity/Operations
- Existing Highway Deficiencies
- Safety
- Minimize Environmental Impacts

First, some of the alternatives that were identified early in the corridor study process were quickly eliminated from further study because it was easily determined that they did not satisfy the purpose and need factors listed above. Other alternatives more appropriately satisfied at least a portion of the purpose and need factors and were retained for further study. Second, additional alternatives were then eliminated through a preliminary screening process because they did not address the purpose and need factors as well as some of the other alternatives. The alternatives listed below are those that were carried forward for further comparison:

Project Section I – Oconto Area

Corridor A – Through Town Existing Alignment

Corridor B – Near West Bypass

Corridor D – Far West Bypass

Project Section II – Oconto to Peshtigo

Corridor A – Reconstruct Existing Alignment with off alignment segment in the area south of Peshtigo.

Project Section III – Peshtigo Area

Corridor A – Through Town Existing Alignment

Corridor F – North Bypass

Corridor G – South Bypass

The alternatives listed above are shown in this evening's exhibit titled *USH 41 CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES AS PRESENTED IN 1999*.

Lastly, the corridor alternatives above were screened even further and a recommended combination of corridors was selected for the project – Corridors B-A-G. This recommended alternative, which has been refined through more detailed design since its selection in January 2000, is shown in this evening's exhibit titled *USH 41 CORRIDOR AS PRESENTLY PROPOSED IN 2005*.

The entire corridor selection process, including the various environmental factors considered, is included in the Federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Copies of this document are available for your review as an exhibit at this evening's meeting.

Exhibits

Three exhibits have been made available for your review this evening. The first exhibit is the Federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Multiple copies have been made available on the tables for review at your convenience this evening. Please do not remove these copies from the town hall. If you would like to review this document after this meeting, copies are available for review at the following locations until June 6, 2005:

WisDOT District #3 Office
944 Vanderperren Way
PO Box 28080
Green Bay, WI 54324-0080

Bureau of Equity & Environmental Analysis
WisDOT
4802 Sheboygan Avenue, Room 451
Madison, WI 53707

Circulation Desk
Farnsworth Public Library
715 Main Street
Oconto, WI 54153

Peshtigo Branch Public Library
331 French Street
Peshtigo, WI 54157

Circulation Desk
Brown County Library
515 Pine Street
Green Bay, WI 54301

Circulation Desk
Cofrin Library
University of Wisconsin – Green Bay
2420 Nicolet Drive
Green Bay, WI 54311

Circulation Desk
Stephenson Public Library
1700 Hall Avenue
Marinette, WI 54143

The second exhibit is a plan view of the USH 41 corridor alternatives as they were presented at the public hearings in 1999. This exhibit shows the approximate location of wetlands, farmed wetlands, subdivisions, and other constraints. The locations of these items as shown on this display are approximate, and are based on aerial photography and historical records. At the time this exhibit was created in 1999, the recommended corridor was not yet selected, and detailed field surveys and investigations for roadway design were not yet performed.

The third exhibit is a plan view of the USH 41 corridor as presently proposed in 2005. This exhibit shows existing roadway right-of-way limits and the approximate ground disturbance limits of the proposed corridor alternative. After this proposed corridor was selected in January 2000, the necessary process of gathering field data via surveys and investigations was completed. This data was since used to develop the preliminary design and to refine the selected corridor. An example of one type of data gathered is the actual wetland locations as determined by field survey, which is also shown on this exhibit.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTACT

If you would like to contact the Wisconsin Department of Transportation regarding the environmental aspects for this project, or if you would like to request a copy of the transcript for this meeting, please contact the following:

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Wisconsin Department of Transportation
District 3
PO Box 28080
944 Vanderperren Way
Green Bay, WI 54324-0080
Phone: (920) 492-0135